

MOTION BY SUPERVISOR DON KNABE

April 14, 2009

The increasing amount of information pointing to a rising epidemic of childhood obesity, in Los Angeles County and across the nation, is alarming. According to our own Department of Public Health, obesity rates for children have tripled since the late nineteen seventies. Research conducted by the First 5 Los Angeles Commission indicates that the number of children under five who are currently overweight is at “epidemic” levels, with the studies further showing that children ages 2-5 in California have a 1-in-5 chance of being overweight, as do children in the 5th, 7th and 9th grades.

The studies are disturbing, but nowhere is this issue more prevalent and pervasive than in the lives of the children that Los Angeles County has direct responsibility for. The Juvenile Court Weight Management Committee indicated that many of the 27,000 children under the court’s jurisdiction have health issues related to their weight. Perhaps most concerning is the use of some psychotropic medications that result in excessive weight gain and metabolic syndrome, a condition that invariably leads to full blown diabetes.

In December 2008, the Los Angeles County Commission for Children and Families issued a report to the Board of Supervisors on childhood obesity. Their Childhood Obesity Committee engaged a wide range of experts from County departments, the juvenile court, service providers and others to examine the issue and develop recommendations that address childhood obesity both on a broad scale and as it pertains to children under the auspices of the County.

MOTION

MOLINA _____

RIDLEY-THOMAS _____

YAROSLAVSKY _____

ANTONOVICH _____

KNABE _____

The Commission's report concludes - and I absolutely agree - that childhood obesity is a multi-faceted problem that will require a comprehensive solution that goes beyond the simplistic notion that children should eat less and exercise more. We need to address this issue in a systemic way to ensure children in this County have every opportunity to grow and thrive in a healthy environment conducive to their emotional and physical well-being.

I, THEREFORE, MOVE that the Chief Executive Officer convene a Child Wellness Workgroup, comprised of the Departments of Public Health, Children and Family Services, Probation, Health, Mental Health, Parks and Recreation, and the Los Angeles County Office of Education, as well as the Commission for Children and Families, the Education Coordinating Council, First 5 Los Angeles, the Child Care Policy Roundtable, the Children's Council of Los Angeles County, the Association of Community Human Service Agencies (ACHSA) and the Juvenile Court, to develop a Child Wellness policy for Los Angeles County that includes a mechanism for enhancing the provision of current nutrition and fitness information to parents, caregivers, and staff, ensures that nutritional guidelines for children both in out-of-home care and in child care settings are adhered to, provides opportunities for public education and training, and addresses issues involving the use of psychotropic medications that cause obesity in children, and report back to the Board in 120 days.

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